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**Report on Rosedale Subdivision  
Richmond, Virginia**

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**John B. Watkins**

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REPORT ON  
ROSEDALE SUBDIVISION  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Thesis  
Submitted for degree of  
Master of Science  
Massachusetts Agricultural College  
Amherst, Massachusetts

by  
John B. Watkins, Jr.

June 4, 1913.

## INTRODUCTION

The following report, which the writer most respectfully submits to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the Massachusetts Agricultural College as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science, constitutes a statement of a piece of work representing the writer's design for the development of a large tract of land located immediately outside of Richmond, Virginia, and owned by the Lewis Ginter Land and Improvement Company. The paper, which assumes the form of a report, will be submitted to the Lewis Ginter Land and Improvement Company as a practical and feasible plan for the development of this property. It is the intention of the Lewis Ginter Land and Improvement Company to develop this tract of land some time within the near future, and the problem was kindly suggested to the writer by a member of that corporation.

All the work connected with this problem, except the making of the topographical survey, which required a stay of nearly two weeks in Richmond, was done in the laboratories of the Department of Landscape Gardening, Massachusetts Agricultural College, under the direct supervision of Professor Frank A. Waugh, Head of the Department.

The writer takes very great pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness to Professor Waugh for his constant encouragement, numerous suggestions, and many courtesies shown throughout the work. He wishes also to thank Mr. Arthur K. Harrison, of the Department, for advice on a number of occasions. Finally, thanks are due Mr. Tscharnier D. Watkine, a brother of the writer, for his kind help in the making of the topographical survey.

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Amherst, Massachusetts, June 1, 1913.

To the Lewis Ginter Land and Improvement Company,

Richmond, Virginia.

Gentlemen:

I take pleasure in submitting at this time my report for the development of Rosedale.

#### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Location of Property. The piece of property owned by the Lewis Ginter Land and Improvement Company and known as Rosedale is situated in Henrico County, Virginia, about two miles north of the city limits of Richmond. The Rosedale tract consists of 262-6/10 acres of land, and is bounded on the north by Bryan Park, on the east by Hermitage Road, on the south by property belonging to the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, Acca Farm and the Catlin Estate, and on the west by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. The Rosedale tract is cut into three unequal parts by Bellevue and Laburnum Avenues, these avenues being parallel and running east and west through the property. Laburnum Avenue terminates at its intersection with the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, while Bellevue Avenue ends where it meets Bryan Park. (See Plan 30 - 2).

But the portion of this property which has been given me for consideration lies between Bellevue Avenue and Bryan Park on the north, and Laburnum Avenue on the south, so what is said in this report will have particular reference to the latter portion which is approximately 171 acres in area.

Lots and Buildings. Lots averaging 100 feet frontage and 300 feet depth are laid out adjoining and facing Hermitage Road, but none have been sold

near the intersection of Hermitage Road with Laburnum Avenue so that any proposed changes in the development of the property at that point could easily be made at this time. There is a 25-foot alley running along the back of these lots. Near the center of the property and 500 feet from Laburnum Avenue is a lot of 2.107 acres which was formerly owned by the Deep Run Hunt Club, of Richmond, but is now held as a private estate. On the south side of this estate a strip of land 66 feet wide has been reserved for a future street or avenue.

There are very few buildings on the property. Five houses have been built on lots sold along the Hermitage Road, and one on the two acre lot referred to above, but other buildings consist only of the farm manager's house, a blacksmith shop and two barns--all of the latter being located near the end of Bellevue Avenue.

Approaches. Rosedale has the advantage of being reached from Richmond by two transportation lines and several attractive macadam roads. Hermitage Road runs from Broad Street by Rosedale to Lakeside Park, three miles further north, and furnishes one of the most direct routes to and from the city. (See Plan 30 - 1). Again, the Virginia Railway and Power Company car line passes up Hermitage Road by Rosedale, making the property very accessible and convenient to people who have business in the city. On the west side of Rosedale the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad furnishes another means of transportation. Acca, the nearest station, is only about 300 feet to the south, and while that station is used very little at present it will, no doubt, be extensively used after Rosedale has been developed.

Another approach which deserves mention is Bellvue Avenue. This is a most attractive avenue coming in from the east. It is a wide macadam road, bordered with attractive trees, with many fine views and is much used now as a pleasure drive.

Vegetation. The land, for the most part, is open and in cultivation. There are a few maples and cherries along the branch running north, and in the northwest corner of the property, just south of Bellevue Avenue, there is an excellent group of oaks. Along the north border there is a strip of pines and oaks which extends around the west side, then south to Laburnum Avenue. The trees on the west side are particularly valuable since they screen off the railroad. The rest of the property is open, clear land.

Topography. The land is undulating for the most part--rolling enough to be interesting and still comparatively level. The most distinct depression is along the small branch, which has its origin near the intersection of Hermitage Road and Laburnum Avenue and which runs in a northwesterly direction. This branch carries very little water and often dries up in the summer. The open field to the west of the branch is the most level portion--the land rising from the branch gently to the comparatively level area and finally sloping gently down again towards the railroad. The greatest differences in elevation on the property is less than 35 feet.

Soil Conditions. There is a dark, somewhat sandy, gravelly soil which is rich in humus and very fertile. The farming operations on this area are very successful--a fact due largely to the excellent soil conditions.

Natural Advantages. Rosedale is particularly fortunate in having so many natural advantages. In many ways, it occupies a most ideal position for the purposes which it will serve.

Bryan Park, which has recently become the property of the city of Richmond, is now under rapid development and promises soon to be one of Richmond's most beautiful park sites. This park possesses an unusual amount of natural beauty and will certainly be a valuable asset to Rosedale.

Again, the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, which



bounde the property on the west, will mean no little to its development. This is a double tracked railroad and being the only direct line between Richmond and Washington it handles all the freight and passenger traffic going north through Richmond. Five different railroads entering Richmond from the south turn over all their northbound freight and passenger traffic to the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. So it is easy to see that the western portion of Rosedale lying next to the railroad is particularly well located for factory sites.

#### REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROBLEM

In the subdivision of Rosedale three main ideas have been kept in mind: first, the development of the central and eastern portion into a high class, attractive residential section; second, the western portion lying next to the railroad into a factory district; and third, the development of that portion lying between the residential section and the factory district into a section suitable for working men's homes. It has also been necessary to work with other things in mind. The future development of the entire tract has been carefully considered, and nothing proposed which would not be in keeping with the proper development of other portions of the property. Again, the adaptation of road system to topography, the reservation of park and playground areas, the treatment of street vistas,--all have been carefully considered to secure the best results.

#### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Street Plan. In laying out Rosedale it has been aimed to secure benefits resulting from three important principles in city planning. The first one relates to the adaptation of street plan to topography. In a very large measure the location of streets has been decided by the natural lay of the land with the idea of always securing the easiest grades, at the same time proper attention being paid to the size and arrangement of lots. The streets, so far



as possible, follow the natural depressions of the land, thus securing very easy grades and also gaining the decided advantage of being lower than the adjoining houselots.

With this system of street layout the amount of necessary road grading required will be very small.

The second principle relates to the main thoroughfares, which should be reasonably direct, ample and convenient.

The most important street through the property will be 100 feet wide, one which I have called Rosebrook Avenue. (See Plan 30 - 3). This avenue commences at the intersection of Hermitage Road with Laburnum Avenue and follows in a general way the course of the branch northwestward, connecting with Bellevue Avenue at the proposed entrance to Bryan Park. This avenue will have a double roadway with a central parking strip and will make the most attractive drive through the property. Two other important streets, 66 feet wide, which I have called Ginter and Wilson Avenues, run approximately east and west across the property, connecting directly the eastern and western portions and thus tying together the whole. Other minor streets, 50 feet wide, have been planned so as to meet the purpose of quiet attractive residence streets in the best possible manner. These local streets have been laid out so as to discourage their use as thoroughfares, and while they are not absurdly crooked they have graceful curves which relieve the monotony of endless straight streets so often seen.

The third principle which has controlled the design of Rosedale is the deliberate setting apart of certain areas for the common use and enjoyment of its residents. The fortunate location of the property on the border of Bryan Park has, of course, made it unnecessary to provide any large park within the area itself; but along with this advantage two public squares have been formed, one near the eastern side--Ginter Square--and the other near the western side--

The Village Common. As Ginter Squares will form the residential focus of the community, so The Village Common will be its business focus. There is a distinct advantage in having the business center separate from the residential, especially is this true in a neighborhood of high class residences. These two squares are a little more than one-half acre each in size and will form the centers around which the public buildings will be placed.

Factories. That portion of land lying next to the railroad has been set apart for factory purposes. The Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, being a trunk line, makes this area especially valuable for manufacturing plants. While I have shown location of factories on Plan 30 - 3, it has only been in a general way since circumstances and conditions arising at the actual time of development would naturally affect the exact location, size and nature of such factories, so that it would be useless to attempt an exact layout at this time. But I would strongly recommend that no plant be allowed on the property for the manufacture of leather, fertilizer, gas, or any other product in which noxious fumes or an excessive amount of smoke are produced.

Playground. Between the house lots on the west side of School Street and the factories I have provided for the development of a playground which covers approximately three acres. The very character of Rosedale's upbuilding becomes a danger if dependence for public recreation is placed upon private yards and vacant lots. These will prove inadequate and unsuitable. It is the intention, in Rosedale, to provide every child not only with the best possible schooling in a conventional sense, but also with ample opportunity to enjoy health-giving and pleasure-giving exercises in the open air amid appropriate surroundings.

A road from the Village Common to the factories divides the playground into two parts. The portion on the south side of the road, which is

about one acre in area, is to be used by the small children,--the playground apparatus being located on this part. The area on the north side of the road will be used for athletic games such as baseball, football, track and other games which require more space. The public school site is located next to the playground--a fact which makes the field accessible to the children at all times.

Design and Distribution of Lots. The size and arrangement of lots is, of course, dependent to a certain extent upon the location of streets, but throughout the property I have designed the lots with two standards in mind, namely, those in the high class district 100 feet frontage by 250 feet depth, and those in the working men's district 80 feet frontage by 150 feet depth. Owing to the curvilinear street system some lots vary considerably from these standards, but that very fact, I believe, is a good point and helps toward the artistic development of the property. The constant duplication in sizes and shapes of house lots, which is so often seen in suburban residential districts, becomes very monotonous, but in Rosedale this will not be so. On the other hand, enough variety has been introduced to make the layout interesting and attractive. (See Plan 30 - 3).

The street system naturally divides that portion to be used for house lots into fourteen blocks, as follows:--

	No. Lots
Block A	32
" B	17
" C	20
" D	20
" E	14
" F	19
" G	14
" H	12
" I	12
" J	17
" K	16
" L	9
" M	22
" N	13
	<u>237</u> = Total No. Lots.

Total No. Lots already sold	8
Total No. Lots reserved for public buildings	<u>5</u>
	13

Leaving 224 salable lots.

Public Buildings. In the development of a community like Rosedale, it would show great lack of foresight if the proper location of necessary public buildings was not considered beforehand. And so I have shown the location of such buildings around the two public squares,--a site for the town hall, a church, and a library grouped around and facing Ginter Square, the residential center; and a public school, post office and store, and church facing the Village Common, the business center. Other public buildings, if needed, may be located as necessity demands.

The public school should be an attractive building of good architecture which will terminate the vista formed by Wilson and Ginter Avenues.

Street Trees. On the main thoroughfares large growing trees are to be used--the American elm, oak, sugar maple, and sweet gum are recommended. On local or minor streets the purpose will be to provide in addition to shade and foliage a touch of color throughout the year. This will be accomplished by the use of flowering trees or those bearing fruit or berries at different seasons. For this purpose, the horse chestnut, American linden, the nettle tree, crataegus, flowering cherry, magnolia, and others could be used, however, using only one species on a particular street to give unity and character to the planting.

Parking Areas. Rosebrook Avenue, with its double roadway and 20-foot parking strip in between, will be the most attractive drive through the property. This parking strip is to be planted with flowering trees and shrubs placed in harmonious groups, with intervening grass strips, and will be interesting throughout the year.

At the north end of Rosebrook Avenue the two roadways diverge, the left road continuing straight to the proposed entrance to Bryan Park, while

the other curves around to the right, following in a general way the natural contour to Bellevue Avenue. The triangular area between these two roadways includes the rather steep hillside on the west side of the branch, and is to be parked. This area can be made most attractive by the proper use of native trees and shrubs. In this way it would make the adjoining house lots particularly desirable.

Paving. The streets are to be paved with carefully constructed macadam which shall be permanent and stand any amount of wear. There is nothing so important to the development of a community as good roads.

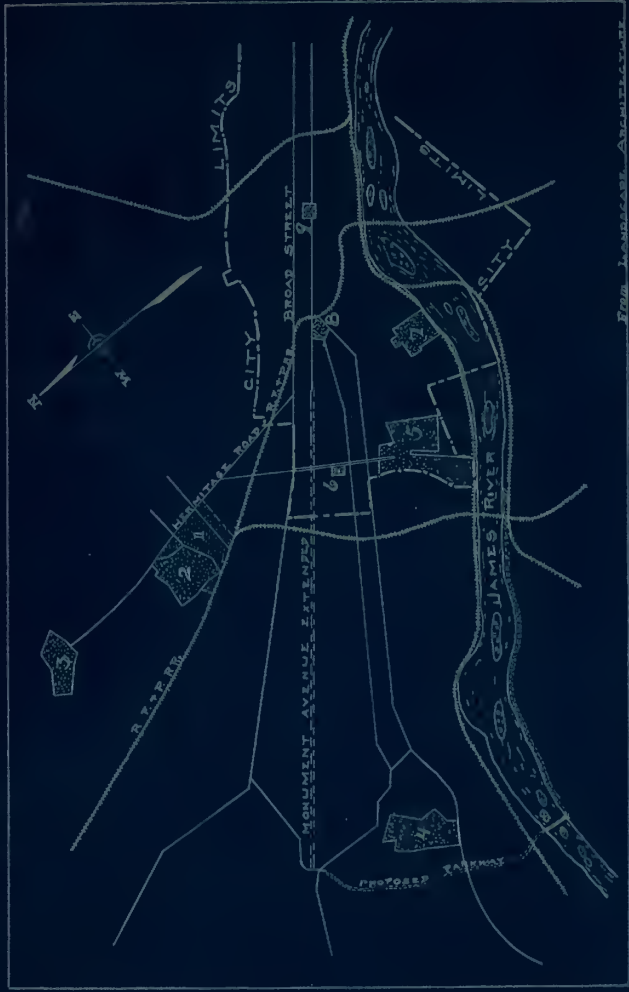
Sidewalks. Sidewalks five feet wide are recommended on all streets except Rosebrook Avenue, on which they should be at least six feet in width. The sidewalks shall be of concrete, and not of the hard smooth finish, but so treated as to expose the varied colors of the gravel. The resulting surface is much more pleasant in color and texture and provides a slightly roughened and more agreeable footing.

Miscellaneous. Numerous other questions, also, will have to be considered in the development of Rosedale, such as sewers and storm drains, water and gas mains, electric wires, street lights, etc., and should my general design prove favorable I would be glad to give the above problems very careful consideration, but they do not fall within the scope of this report so are not considered at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

## PLATES TO ACCOMPANY REPORT

Plan No.	30 - 1	Key Map showing Relation of Rosedale to City of Richmond
" "	30 - 2	Topographical Map
" "	30 - 3	Plan showing General Layout
" "	30 - 4	Plan showing Location of Streets, Lots, and Factories
" "	30 - 5	Street Sections
" "	30 - 6	Hermitage Road
" "	30 - 7	Sections of Avenues bounding Rosedale



FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

- |                  |                     |                       |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. ROSEDALE      | 4. RICHMOND COLLEGE | 7. HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY |
| 2. BRYAN PARK    | 5. BYRD PARK        | 8. MUNROE PARK        |
| 3. LAKESIDE PARK | 6. CONFEDERATE MEM. | 9. VA. STATE CAPITOL  |

## KEY MAP

SHOWING THE RELATION OF ROSEDALE  
TO THE CITY OF RICHMOND VIRGINIA

PLAN No. 30-1      SCALE 1 IN. = 10,000 FT. (APP.)

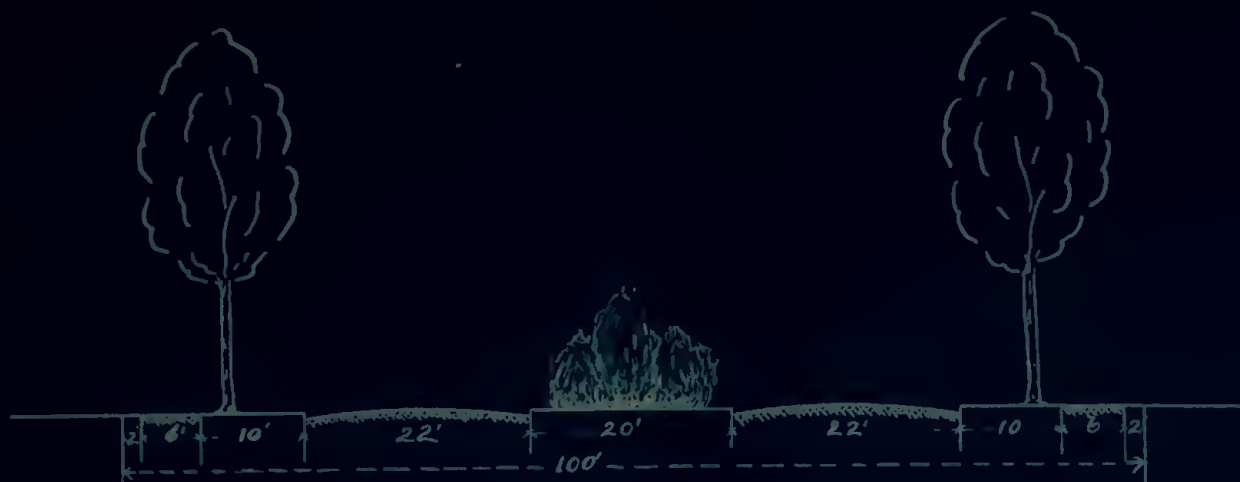




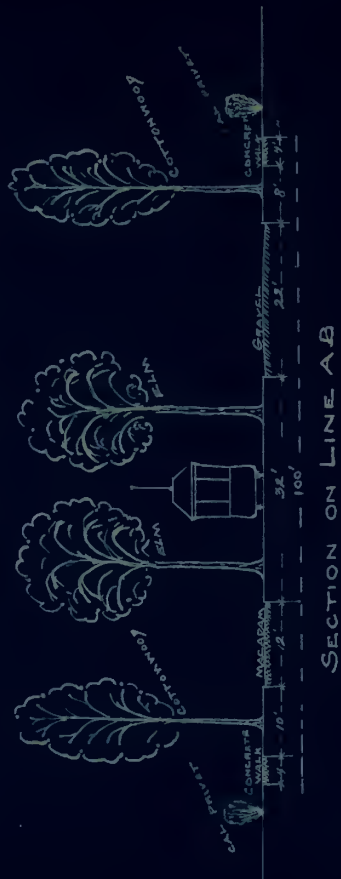
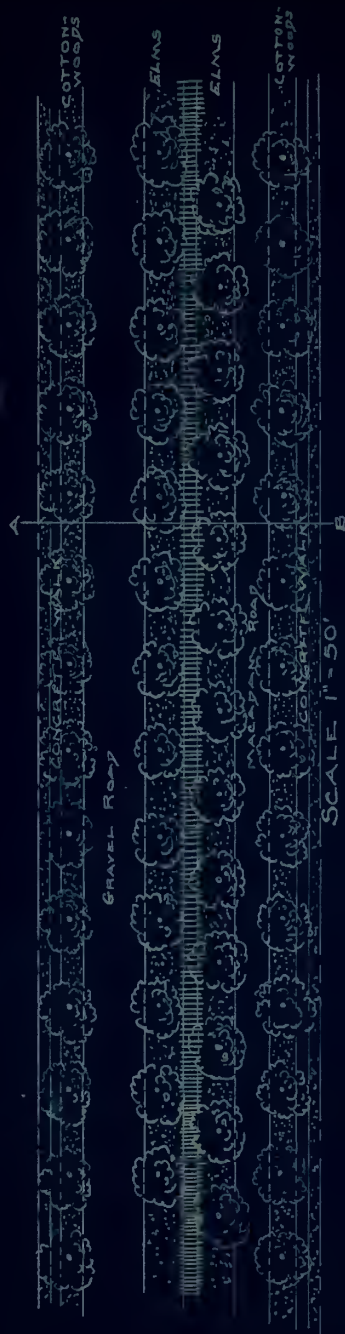


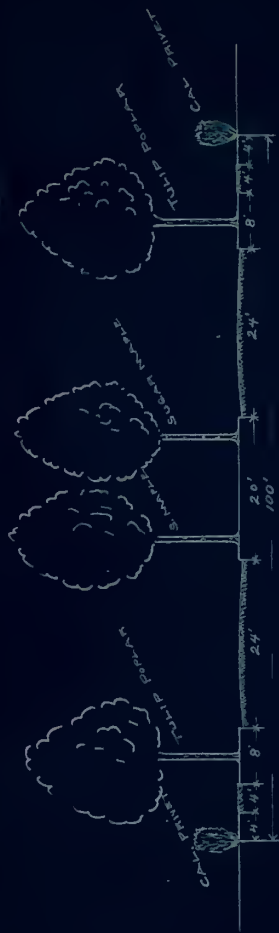




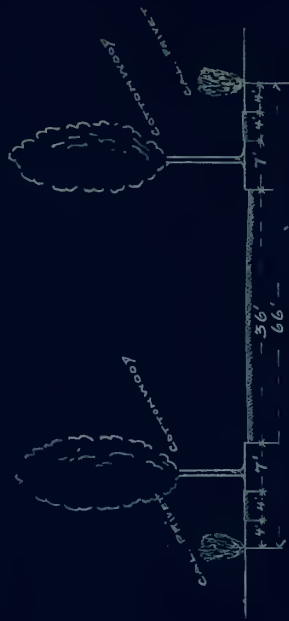


STREET SECTIONS FOR ROSEDALE  
 TO ACCOMPANY GENERAL PLAN  
 PLAN No. 30-5





LABURNUM AVENUE



BELLEVUE AVENUE

# SECTIONS OF AVENUES BOUNDING "ROSEDALE"

HENRICO COUNTY, VIRGINIA.  
J. E. WATKINS JR., DEL.

SCALE 1" = 20'

JAN. 10, 1913.

PLAN No. 30-7



